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RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3915  
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 0128  
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 4530  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 0397  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0352  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0408  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4124  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2398  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0436  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7383  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1069  
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 0487  
RUEHUM/AMEMBASSY ULAANBAATAR 0095  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1798  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 000476

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/22/2018

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS RESPONDS  
TO HUMAN RIGHTS PROPOSALS

REF: TASHKENT 444 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Poloff Steven Prohaska for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

¶1. (C) Summary: On April 11, the Ambassador used a meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Nematov to pursue our dialogue with Uzbekistan on human rights as a follow-on to A/DAS Spratlen's March meetings with senior Uzbek officials and an array of human rights representatives (reftel). Nematov noted that the ICRC had declined the GOU's offer of a meeting with the Prime Minister or Foreign Minister, said that legal problems for a Jewish aid organization and Lubovitch Rabbi Gurevich would be resolved once they settled longstanding "technical" issues; and replied testily that imprisoned Sunshine Coalition leader Sanjar Umarov had violated the law and that his case was an "internal matter" for Uzbekistan. Nematov's interest in a proposed four-part human rights framework was lukewarm, but a continued dialogue is essential to seeing further improvements in Uzbekistan's human rights situation. End summary.

¶2. (C) During an April 11 meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Nematov, the Ambassador outlined a four-part notional framework for a bilateral dialogue on human rights, pegging the themes of abuse of detainees and prisoners, legal reform and implementation, transparency and development of civil society, and reform of democratic institutions to recent incidents in Uzbekistan. The Ambassador recommended a more concrete dialogue regarding specific human rights issues in each of these areas as a way to advance the bilateral relationship in this important sphere.

¶3. (C) For example, the Ambassador asked whether it would be possible for President Karimov to meet with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Nematov responded that the ICRC had declined the Government of Uzbekistan's (GOU) offer of a meeting with the Prime Minister or Foreign

Minister, insisting instead on a meeting with President Karimov. Reviewing the four-part framework, Nematov said that none of these issues was really new for Uzbekistan. Nematov stated that he had discussed the European Union's Strategy for Central Asia in Brussels, and deeply studied a wide range of human rights issues. On the issue of implementing the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Nematov asserted that Uzbekistan was in compliance with his advice and did not see the need for another visit to Uzbekistan. Nematov did not respond to suggestions that Human Rights Watch be accredited immediately or that Western journalists be given visas to report on developments in Uzbekistan firsthand.

14. (C) In response to our queries concerning recent accreditation problems in the Jewish community, he underscored Uzbekistan's history of tolerance and good relations with its Jewish community. He said that if the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and Lubovitch Rabbi Gurevich follow Uzbekistan's law on financial transactions and resolve the appropriate technical and accounting issues, they will be accredited. He added that according to Uzbekistani and Israeli law, a minimum of eight synagogues in a country are necessary before someone can officially be a rabbi. Uzbekistan has only four, however. Nematov cited several irregularities that the Ministry of Justice has allegedly tolerated for some time but is no longer willing to permit. He stressed repeatedly that there is no anti-Semitism in Uzbekistan. (Note: On April 16, the Israeli Ambassador told Ambassador Norland that he believes trumped-up accusations against the Rabbi originated from a competing Bukharan Jewish synagogue in Tashkent. He

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described it as an unfortunate "internal problem within the Jewish community," but did not rule out that it might have been fueled by Uzbek officials who dredged up allegations of financial impropriety. On April 19, the Israeli Ambassador told us that Gurevich had been told that all he needed was a letter from the Israeli Ambassador to receive accreditation. The Israeli Ambassador provided the letter, and we are waiting to determine whether this worked. End note.)

15. (C) In response to the Ambassador's request for an update on the health of imprisoned Sunshine Coalition leader Sanjar Umarov, Nematov said that Umarov is in prison for violating the law. Furthermore, he argued that this is an internal affair that the U.S. should not concern itself with and said that if Uzbekistan continues to release political prisoners no one will respect the law. (Note: Rapid Reaction group member Shukrat Ganiev (strictly protect) recently indicated, citing an unnamed high-ranking source in the General-Prosecutor's office, that the GOU may release Umarov due to health concerns. In his opinion, this was the best way for the GOU to resolve the problem, as the GOU would not have to say that he is innocent. Nevertheless, Ganiev's information is unconfirmed and he has had a mixed record on predicting releases. End note.)

16. (C) Comment: Whether Deputy Foreign Minister Nematov admits it or not, we are in a human rights dialogue and it is going to continue. The question for us is whether that dialogue amounts only to talk for the sake of talking. We would argue that it does not--that limited but tangible progress has emerged and that useful insights are being gained on both sides that may facilitate further progress. It is slow, and at times deeply frustrating, but it is worth pursuing. We encourage senior human rights officials from DRL or other appropriate bureaus to visit Tashkent as a way of intensifying engagement on this important front.

NORLAND